

Vermont Commission on Women

Meeting Minutes

June 12, 2013

4th Floor Conference Room, Pavilion Office Building, Montpelier, VT

Commissioners present:

Marcia Merrill (Chair), Gretchen Bailey,
Eileen Boland, Carol Buchdahl, Charlotte Dennett,
Laine Dunham, Ruth Finn, Jennie Gartner, Susie Hudson,
Dr. Felicia Kornbluh, Danielle Martel, and Shambulia
Gadsden Sams.

Commissioners absent:

Cathy Frey, Nancy LaVarnway, and
Marion Milne.

Advisors present: Diane Derby representing Senator Leahy's Office, Sarah Kenney representing the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, Margaret Luce representing Vermont State Nurses Association, Sue Racanelli representing the Vermont League of Women Voters, and Kelly Walsh representing Vermont Works for Women.

Guests: Bailey Annis, Intern from Norwich University, Abigail Kiablick from Senator Sanders Office, and Martha Mathis, Dean of Students at Norwich University.

Staff: Cary Brown, Janet Bullard and Lilly Talbert.

Presiding: Marcia Merrill

Recording: Janet Bullard

1. Welcome/Introductions

Marcia welcomed everyone and asked folk to introduce themselves and share a memory or thought about Janet and her contributions to the Commission since this is her last Commission Meeting. Janet thanked everyone and noted that she has enjoyed her 26 years with the commission.

2. Approval of May 2013 meeting minutes

Motion made by Carol Buchdahl and seconded by Laine Dunham:

To approve the minutes as submitted. MOTION APPROVED

3. Election of Chair of the Commission

Motion made by Felicia Kornbluh and seconded by Ruth Finn:

To elect Marcia Merrill as Chair of the Commission for a two-year term. MOTION APPROVED

4. Committees Meet

5. Report out from Committees

Laine Dunham, Chair of the Economic Security Committee, reported that the committee decided to concentrate their efforts on the following issues: financial literacy, equal pay, paid sick days and issues surrounding Reach Up. They also agreed to work on ratifying the Equal Rights Amendment.

Carol Buchdahl, Chair of Health, Safety, and Civil Rights Committee, reported that the committee discussed putting together a panel discussion on the various toxins in the environment and their impact on women's health.

Eileen Boland, Chair of the Education Committee, reported that the committee focused their discussion on the *Enough Said* Report and agreed to work on the four issue areas outlined in the report.

6. "Enough Said" report and Task Force presentation

Kelly Walsh, Director of Girls' Programs at Vermont Works for Women, explained that Vermont Works for Women has recently produced a report, *Enough Said: Young Women Talk About School, Work and Becoming Adults: Why We Should Listen and What We Can Do*. She continued by saying that the report is a result of the work done in nine listening sessions and written surveys of two hundred women, ages 15-25, in various communities in Vermont. As a result of this work, Vermont Works for Women has established *The Task Force on Young Women and the Vermont Economy*. The task force has been broken up into three subcommittees to work on the four themes identified in the report, which are as follows (excerpted from the report):

- 1) They are ill-equipped to manage work and money: "I don't have a clue what kind of income I need to be bringing home weekly/monthly in a job in order to have my own apartment, buy food and necessities." Most young women with whom we spoke expressed feeling unprepared for the most basic tasks of adulthood – writing cover letters and resumes, researching careers, making a budget and living within it, opening a bank account and balancing a checkbook, shopping for groceries, buying a car and renting an apartment, filling out tax or financial aid forms.
- 2) That Allies and supportive networks are in short supply: "I get along with better with guys... girls are just horrible to each other." None of us "makes it" without allies – peers, parents, mentors, and others from whom we can accept criticism and who believe in our talent, and inspire our best effort. Indeed, when asked about the factors most important to their future success, 60% of survey respondents identified, "a supportive network of family and friends." Yet concerns about relational aggression among girls and young women emerged over and over again as a serious impediment to developing needed self-confidence and supportive networks.
- 3) That they have limited exposure to work and career options: "There's the tech center where you can get a taste of trade and learn things that can help you in the future but it's not like they are making you (try it) so enrolling has to come from your own self-awareness... it's all on your own shoulders." Indeed, how does one know she wants to be an auto mechanic if she hasn't handled a socket wrench or crawled under a car? The obvious answer: exposure. In all of the listening sessions we conducted, participants talked about wanting to interact

more with “real people, to hear their stories about what they do, and what they feel passionately about.”

- 4) That they are short on experience that engage and motivate: “I didn’t go out of my way in high school or try new things or to figure out what makes me tick. I never really connected to much of anything.” Those with whom we spoke found it very hard to talk about careers and education in anything but imprecise terms. Although they could list fields in which they were interested, or certifications or apprenticeships that seemed intriguing, few could say very much about *why* they were of interest. Most could not articulate what they ultimately wanted from a career. Overall, it was hard to keep the discussion focused on the topic. Their vagueness reflects more than lack of exposure. It reflects limited experience in activities that engage talent and passion and inspire their best effort.

7. Announcements

Diane Derby announced that the Women’s Economic Opportunity Conference is scheduled for Saturday, October 19th at Vermont Technical College in Randolph Center.

Meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.